

VZCZCXRO1631  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHMOS  
DE RUEHGB #0852/01 0751841  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 161841Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3332  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000852

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (S U B J E C T L I N E)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/13/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IECI COMMISSIONER COMMENTS ON LESSONS LEARNED FOR THE PROVINCIAL ELECTONS AND THE COMMISION'S FUTURE

REF: 05 BAGHDAD 5154

BAGHDAD 00000852 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Acting Chair of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) Hamdia Al-Hussaini, met with PolOff 9 March to discuss recommendations from the IMIE-sponsored after action conference in Madrid and the future of the IECI. Recommendations from the Madrid conference include items for consideration in a future election law, ideas on how to improve IECI performance, and voting process changes. Hamdia also expressed concern that political parties will directly appoint future Commissioners, eliminating the independence of any future election commission. Hamdia became acting chair after Chairman Izadin Al-Mohamady, stepped down in February. END SUMMARY.

-----  
LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE MADRID CONFERENCE  
-----

¶12. (C) On 9 March, PolOff met with IECI Acting Chair Hamdia Al-Hussaini to discuss her attendance at a post-election conference in Madrid. The 27-29 February conference was sponsored by the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) and was the second of three major after action events attended by IECI Commissioners to discuss lessons learned from December's Council of Representative elections. IMIE, an independent and international elections monitoring group, played a key role during the December elections (reftel). Commissioner Hamdia said that the conference was very productive and the IECI was praised for the overall success of the elections under difficult circumstances.

¶13. (C) Hamdia said the focal point of the conference was on lessons learned from the election. These lessons included specific items which should be addressed in the anticipated election law, the management of elections, and internal IECI procedures and staffing.

¶A. Election Laws Changes. There was wide agreement by conference attendees that the new election law should include provisions to punish political parties or individual candidates who violated the law or IECI regulations during the campaign. During the December election there were clear violations observed, but no way to sanction the violators. Many, but not all, of the participants also felt that the law should be written so that it would allow selected re-balloting in areas where

high fraud rates were determined to exist. Hamdia said that the attendees agreed that out-of-country voting rules did not provide fair representation for Iraqis living overseas.

¶B. IECI Improvements. The conference participants cited IECI staffing shortfalls as a significant problem, specifically, the lack of adequate legal staff to review and handle complaints. The IECI was also criticized for relying too heavily on television and the print media. Hamdia said that conference attendees felt the IECI commissioners should have had more direct contact with the electorate and better interaction with the political parties.

¶C. Process Improvements. Finally, Hamdia told PolOff there was general agreement among conference participants that the way the voter registration lists were distributed was problematic in that the same list went to multiple polling centers. This allowed a person to show up at different centers and vote without the ability to cross check to see if they had already voted somewhere else. (Comment: the presence of ink on the tip of voters' index fingers would presumably have prevented this, but Hamdia was adamant this was a problem.) To prevent this, she said, future registration lists must be specific to each polling station. It was also suggested by IMIE recommended that during future elections political party representatives be given copies of the tally sheets after the count at each center. This was opposed by the IECI Commissioners, who pointed out that most of the polling centers did not have copy machines and any tally sheets given out could be modified by the political parties to create mischief or claim fraud.

-----  
COMMENTS ON THE DELAYED SEATING OF GOVERNMENT  
-----

BAGHDAD 00000852 002.2 OF 002

¶4. (C) Commissioner Hamdia said she was frustrated with the political infighting and delay in the seating of parliament. She said that the constitution and will of the people were not being respected and that people were fed up with political parties and politicians who were only out for their own interests. She also stated her belief that the delays in seating the government only work to the insurgency's advantage and that the longer the delay, the worse the security situation seems to become.

-----  
THE FUTURE OF THE IECI  
-----

¶5. (C) According to Hamdia, Shia Coalition leader Hussein al-Shahristani met with the IECI Commissioners several weeks ago to address the Commissioners concerns about the future of the IECI. During that meeting Shahristani told the IECI Commissioners that an election law was drafted but postponed to the new parliament for action, where he promised it would be one of the first items of legislation brought up for discussion.

¶6. (C) When asked her own views on the future of the IECI, Commissioner Hamdia, said that she would like to continue as an Election Commissioner, and hoped that an extension of the current IECI would be enacted before their mandate expires on May 15. She said she was fearful that if this was not the case, when a new commission was finally established the commissioners would be appointed by the various political parties and the Commission would lose its independence.

-----

COMMENT

-----

¶7. (C) Comment: Hamdia's expressions of concern over politicization of the Commission are notable given her own Shia Islamist links. Her sentiments also echo a statement to PolOffs on March 8 by former IECI Chairman Izadin Al-Mohammady. Mohammady told PolOffs that when the IECI formally delivered the election results to President Talabani, Talabani noted that his preference would be to have a commission whose members were chosen by political parties. With the conclusion of the Madrid conference, the IECI Commissioners are now preparing for their final after-action conference, an April 5-7 UN-sponsored off-site in Cyprus. Barring the quick passage of an election law allowing for either an extension of or the continuation of the IECI, this conference, and the final report written afterwards, will conclude the IECI's work in its present form.

KHALILZAD